October 28, 2019

[This episode starts with Robert and Autumn walking through the hallways of the school, both covered in food.]

Autumn: The day’s almost over, the day’s almost over, the day’s almost over…

Robert: If you keep talking like that, you’re going to go insane.

Autumn: I’m fairly sure I already am. You don’t wanna know the things I saw during lunch. Laura is really ramping up her tactics. I just gotta keep telling myself we’ve only got a couple of hours to go.

Robert: Yeah, with whatever Kimiko throws our way.

[Cut to them in class. Autumn looks very annoyed. We focus on her face as she sways back and forth.]

Kimiko: The floor is lava is one of the most classickest games out there. It’s important for each and every one of you to be a master at it.

[The camera pans back to reveal that Autumn is balancing on top of a chair, and struggling to do so. The classroom floor is covered with spicy chilli. Kimiko rides around the classroom on a bicycle, spraying the stuff in various adults’ face as she turns. Grown-ups fall as she talks, resulting in them being covered in the gunk. Eventually Rover gets excited with the food on Autumn and charges her, knocking her down. Kimiko skids to a stop next to Autumn and does not look too pleased.]

Kimiko: You gotta play a lot better if you wanna good grade, Autumn.

Autumn: It wasn’t my fault, your dog knocked me over!

Kimiko: And what’s wrong with a little extra challenge?

[Autumn gets up and brushes herself up. She rolls her eyes.]

Autumn: Nothing.

Kimiko: That’s what I thought, and speakin’ of extra challenge I got an announcement to make.

[Cut to posters being passed to all of the grown-ups. Kimiko passes some herself and Rover delivers the rest. Gwen takes a look at it, revealing a poster for a pageant.]

Gwen: The Summerway Grown-Up’s Cuteness Pageant?

Kimiko: I’m going to be judging it this year, and I thought I’d give some of you an opportunity to get your grades up. Just competing is gonna be enough to get extra credit.

[Autumn takes a look at the poster.]

Autumn: Seriously, who would degrade themselves just to act cutesy in front of a bunch of judgemental kids?

[Cecelia bursts on camera, grabbing Autumn in a tight hug.]

Cecelia: Ohmygosh, ohmygosh, ohmygosh, can you believe it!?

Autumn: Hi Cecelia

Cecelia: I am so gonna rock this pageant. I do every single year.

Autumn: Yes, I've heard. I don't think I've ever stopped hearing about it.

Cecelia: Don't worry, I'll give you plenty of pointers!

[Autumn pushes Cecelia away in anger.]

Autumn: Pointers? I'm not gonna compete in this thing! It's—

Cecelia: Oh, I getcha. This kinda thing is behind your times.

Autumn: Behind my times!?

Cecelia: Well, there comes a time in everyone's life when they're just not as cute as they used to be. I'm sure that Ms. Kimiko will understand and give you an assignment that better fits your um… qualities.

[Cut to Autumn standing at the front of class.]

Autumn: Sign me up for the pageant, Ms. Kimiko.

[Everyone in the class has a shocked expression, including Cecelia and Kimiko. Kimiko doesn't even react. She just stares on, as we hear sound effects of a computer crashing or failing to update. Autumn takes her seat and sticks her tongue

out at Cecelia.]

Cecelia: My, I wasn’t expecting you to actually go for that…

Autumn: Well, what’s wrong with taking your education seriously? Are we afraid of a little competition?

Cecelia: N-no, why would I be?

Autumn: Oh, you don’t know it? Well, I’m sure the judges will be able to tell you.

[Cecelia quickly looks into a pocket mirror.]

Cecelia: W-what’s wrong?

Autumn: Nothing. You’ve got… a unique charm.

[Autumn shoots a snide grin towards Cecelia. Cecelia gives a nervous chuckle.]

Cecelia: W-what am I worried about? Between you and me, judges don’t find gray a good hair color, Autumn.

Robert: Autumn, I think you’re getting ahead of yourself.

Autumn: What? You’ve heard what she said. And what she says before every single pageant. This is the only way to get her to finally shut up about it.

Robert: Are you forgetting about something?

Autumn: I’m sure I can figure out a talent, an outfit, and—

Robert: No, I mean our kids.

Autumn: I don’t see how that’s going to be a problem. I’m sure Sally will be fine with me taking some interest in educational career.

[Jump cut to the Dunn house.]

Sally: Absolutely not!

Autumn: Why not?

Sally: These pageants make a mockery of both grown-ups and cuteness. I’d like to think that my parents have a little bit more dignity than to enroll in one of these things. Now go get your monster costume, I built a city in the living room and I need something to fight off.

[Autumn thinks for a moment and then she comes to an idea.]

Autumn: Sally… I just thought…

Sally: Thought what?

Autumn: Nah, I don’t think you’d understand.

Sally: Tell me!

[Autumn sits down on the couch.]

Autumn: Well, it’s been so long since I was last on stage entertaining people. I thought that this might be my chance to do it again, if only for one night. Maybe I could feel that spark again when the lights go on and the crowd cheers.

[Autumn shoots Sally a bittersweet smile. Sally battles with some inner turmoil.]

Sally: A-alright, if it’s that important to you, I’ll let you do it. But I’m not gonna like it.

Autumn: Well, you don’t have to like it, you just gotta be a part of it.

Sally: Wait what?

Autumn: There’s the parent-child talent section.

Sally: Why can’t Max do it?

[The camera pans over to Max who had just paused his video game. Max happily explains.]

Max: Max can’t do it because he’s moving to Fireland until this whole thing is over. I’ll give you my new phone number when I get there, goodbye.

[Max gets up and he walks out the door. It’s mostly silent for a bit, with nothing but the sounds and visuals of Max driving off and the other two characters staring off.]

Sally: Alright, fine, whatever, but you owe me big time!

Autumn: Yes, absolutely!

[Cut to Autumn entering the kitchen, walking towards the fridge.Robert is sitting at the kitchen table with a camcorder]

Autumn: Whatever Sally wants, it’ll be totally worth shutting Cecelia up.

Robert: Don’t you think that you’re going a little far with this thing?

Autumn: C’mon, it’s just one tiny little fib.

Robert: No, it’s a rather big fib. Sally really thinks that this is important to you. Don’t you think that that’s gonna come back to haunt you at some point.

Autumn: After this pageant is over, I’m never gonna have to worry about this again.

Robert: Oh, I wouldn’t say that.

Autumn: What do you mean?

[Robert raises the camcorder]

Robert: I’m all ready to capture your big debut. Have fun, honey.

[Autumn looks really annoyed through the camcorder.]

[Autumn keeps that expression as we transition to the back of the pageant set. Autumn is now wearing a ridiculously cutesy dress and an over-the-top glittery heart bow in her hair. Sally pops out from behind her.]

Sally: Does it fit?

Autumn: After the corset, yeah.

Sally: Good, good. I was worried. After you told me how important this was to you, I thought that this dress would be the perfect thing to help you win.

Autumn: Yeah, it’s… uh… it’s great, Sally.

Sally: If you feel too ridiculous we can call it quits, you know.

Autumn: Ridiculous? I’ve never felt more like myself in my entire life!

Sally: Really? I’ll have to remember that next time we go clothes shopping.

[Autumn grumbles.]

Sally: Oh, I forgot the dimples. I’m gonna go and find some red paint.

[Sally rushes off. Autumn looks into her vanity.]

Autumn: What have you got yourself into Autumn?

[Cecelia walks up.]

Cecelia: Wow… Autumn, you've really gone all-out for this.

[Autumn perks up and smiles at Cecelia]

Autumn: Oh yes, Cecelia. And I wanted to thank you personally for encouraging me to give this a chance. I know an old dog like me doesn't have much of a chance of winning, but it is nice to compete…

Cecelia: Um… right-o! Well, I gotta go get ready and scrub my uh… omelets. See you on the stage, Autumn.

[Cut to Sally walking around and looking at some of the adults in ridiculous or over-the-top costumes. We see many adults that we know trying to compete, notable among them are Blake, Gwen, and Joe. Linda is right by him, angrily whining.]

Linda: So tell me again why you're wearing that ridiculous outfit?

Joe: To win back your love, of course!

Linda: And does making a fool out of yourself do that?

Joe: Well, I figured that if I looked as ridiculous as possible, you'd feel that much better by comparison.

Linda: That is the sweetest thing I've ever heard. Or dumbest. It's gonna take me

awhile to figure out which.

[Sally cringes as she walks by.]

Sally: Ugh, I can’t imagine what kind of uncaring, spotlight grabbing, jerk kid would let their parents compete in—

Molly: Oh hi Sally! Is Robert competing in this year’s Cuteness Pageant?

[Sally turns to ice as she hears Molly. She slowly turns around.]

Sally: Molly… you actually support this?

Molly: Oh yeah, this is mine and my dad’s thing, you know. At first I was kinda hesitant, but he really loved it, and now it’s somethin’ we prepare for all year long.

Sally: Uh yeah…

Molly: So, where’s Robert?

Sally: He’s in the audience. Autumn is competing.

[There’s a beat. Then Molly starts laughing.]

Molly: We’re gonna have a hard time beatin’ you in the child-parent competition if yer talent is jokes. Autumn in a cuteness pageant.

[Molly walks off. Sally shrugs and she starts walking in the other direction, where she crashes into Talula.]

Sally: Hey, watch where you're— Talula!?

Talula: Oh, it's you. I should have known that someone like you would support this ridiculous charade.

Sally: What's that supposed to mean?

Talula: Oh, nothing. It just seems to be right up the alley of the alien girl

Sally: That wasn't me, that was—

Talula: And the girl who started the little epidemic in the mall. It's starting to seem like whenever there's a problem, I can guarantee that you will be at the source.

Sally: Well, what's the problem that YOU'VE got here.

Talula: My mother has some strange desire to debase herself on live television.

Sally: This is going to be on live television?

Talula: Of course. Is that a problem?

Sally: No, I just wanna make sure the camera's rollin' when my mom beats yours hands down.

Talula: Do you really want get into a fight you cannot win?

Sally: Oh, I’m sorry, I thought it was MY mom who saved the mall while yours just hid in a broom closet waiting for the cravers to get her.

[Talula has an angered sneer.]

Talula: Well then, when my mother defeats yours in this competition, I’ll strike down your ego a notch or two myself.

[Talula walks up ahead.]

Talula: Eliza, where are you? We need to rehearse your imagination proclamations—

[Talula walks off, leaving Sally steaming. Sally walks up to Autumn.]

Sally: Autumn, we gotta talk—

Cherry {Voice over}: Hello boys and girls, and welcome to the cutest event in Summerway. We’re gonna figure out who is the most precious grown-up in our entire down and crown them Mr. or Ms. Huggably Adorable, now let’s meet our contestants!

Sally: Well, you’d better get out there!

[We cut to the stage. Cherry is standing there in the most adorable outfit she has. The adults start coming out, starting with Eliza and Gwen. They’re too busy pushing each other back and forth.]

Cherry: And here we have—

[Cherry gets pushed out of the way as the two start pushing each other. Both adults make it to the edge of the catwalk where they try and give off a curtsey]

Eliza: I’m Ms. Eliza

Gwen: And I’m Ms. Gwen, the future Ms. Huggably Adorable of Summerway.

[Cut to the judge’s table. We have three characters here - Kimiko, Violet, and Franklin. They all start whispering amongst each other. Eliza and Gwen both make gigantic smiles. The other adults make their way onto the stage. Jacy walks on and we have a shot of Molly clapping happily for him, and Sally sitting next to her, trying to be comfortable with being there. Blake looks incredibly shy. Joe has his shoes tied together and falls flat on his face.]

[We cut to back stage, with Autumn looking onwards.]

Cecelia: Getting cold feet, Autumn?

Autumn: Nope, just… extremely excited for my turn to wow everyone.

Cecelia: Well, have fun behind me. They say that a first impression makes or breaks your entire performance. I’m sure it’s nothing for an expert to be nervous about though.

[Cut to Cecelia walking onto stage, twirling and generally acting like an idiot. She fights Cherry for the microphone.]

Cherry: Hey, that’s mine!

[Cecelia takes the microphone.]

Cecelia: Hiya! I’m Cecelia and I just wanted to say high to my classroom bestie, Elma!

[Cecelia taps on the microphone, making Cherry cover her ears in pain.]

Cecelia: Is this thing on?

Cherry: Yeah, it’s in kidpitch, like all the microphones here. So even if Elma was watching she wouldn’t be able to hear it.

Cecelia: Wait, all of the microphones are kidpitch? How am I gonna hear what the judges think about me?

[Cherry takes her microphone back.]

Cherry: You can’t. That’s the point.

Cecelia: That’s a stupid change.

Cherry: Well, it has something to do with someone begging the judges to bump up her score. For three hours.

Cecelia: Wow, the kinda woman who has the dedication to do something like that…

Cherry: Just… go to the end of the catwalk and give a smile or something.

Cecelia: Okay!

[Cecelia dopily walks to the end of the catwalk and gives a smile. There's a bunch of panic in the audience. We cut to Robert. We hear the camera lens crack. He nervously takes a look at it.]

Robert: Uh… wow. Totally editing that one out.

[Robert takes a spare lens out of his pocket and fixes it.]

Robert: Alright Autumn. No matter what you do, it can't be as… bad as that.

[Cut to Autumn behind the curtain.]

Autumn: First impressions are important, huh? Well, let's put on a show.

[Cut to Autumn daintily skipping down the catwalk. She childishly turns her body a bit as she gives a big beaming smile to the audience.]

Autumn: Hello everyone, I'm Ms. Autumn and it's my biggest bestest dream to brighten up your day just the tiniest bit.

[Autumn gives a wink and a curtsey and she skips back to the lineup. Cut to Sally and Molly. Both of them are equally confused.]

Molly: Uh… Sally, I dunno what ta tell you but I think yer mother's been involved in some kinda body switching accident.

[Sally facepalms.]

Robert: I uh… see where Sally gets her puppy-dog eyes.

[Cut to Cherry neatening herself up as she walks on stage.]

Cherry: Well, it seems like we've got some stiff competition tonight.

[Gwen and Eliza both look very angrily towards Autumn. Cecelia bounces up and down.]

Cecelia: I have SO got this in the bag.

[Everyone looks awkwardly at her.]

Cherry: Um… yes. Well, these grown-ups are going to try and earn the approval of the audience, as showcased by our Darling Detector

[Cherry points to an applause-o-meter. It goes from a frown past hearts, flowers, rainbows, and ends on a blushing happy face.]

Cherry: And of course our purveyors of all things cute, the judges—

[The camera showcases the three judges.]

Cherry: First we have Ms. Kimiko Kyung, a teacher of Summerway school.

Kimiko: If there’s anyone in the world who knows cute, it’s gonna be me.

Cherry: And of course there’s uh…

Violet: Princess Rainbow Bubblegum Moonlight Dreams

[The other judges look at her.]

Violet: It’s a family name.

Cherry: O-of course, and finally we have Franklin Barrows, the biggest cuteness expert in town.

[Cut to Sally. She lifts her head out of her palms and gives the most baffled expression possible.]

Sally: Molly, can I ask you a favor?

Molly: What’s that?

Sally: I need you to punch me as hard as you can.

Molly: Uh… why would I do that?

Sally: Either I’m dreaming, or I really really want to be dreaming right now.

[Cut to Sally walking backstage. As she does so, she passes by Gwen and Eliza fighting over the same princess costume.]

Sally: Autumn, we need to talk. Are you really gonna let this competition make a monkey out of you?

[Sally looks around and ends up bumping into Autumn, who is dressed up like a monkey.]

Autumn: Sally!?

Sally: Mom!?

Autumn: Uh… hi

Sally: You… are aware that you're dressed up like a monkey, right?

[Autumn looks to see Cecelia nearby looking through a rack of costumes.]

Autumn: Well, I've got look as cute as possible, and I hear monkeys are a barrel of laughs. Besides Jacy took the dog costume.

Sally: I never thought I'd see my mother willingly dress up and go on live television.

Autumn: W-wait, this thing is televised?

Sally: Yeah, of course it is. It's one of the biggest events of the month.

Autumn: So… all of Summerway just saw my wink and curtsey?

Sally: Yeah. I had a hard time believing it, but I understand now this is something you really wanna do. It might be tough for me to be a pageant daughter, but I'll try my best. Now let's get you to win this thing!

Autumn: Sally, I uh… maybe we should talk—

[Cecelia walks by with a costume.]

Cecelia: Oh Autumn that's the costume that you're going with? I'm sure that someone finds eating bugs out of their friend's hair cute.

[Autumn gets incredibly angry. She looks down to Sally who is giving as supportive of a grin as she can.]

Autumn: I… uh…

[She looks back towards Cecelia.]

Autumn: There is nothing I want more on Earth than to win this competition.

Sally: Alright, glad to hear it. Molly gave me a bunch of tips, and you need to step up your game.

Autumn: Step up my game?

Sally: Yeah, for the costume contest it's not enough to dress up, you gotta really act. Give me your best monkey sounds!

Autumn: I uh… don’t know—

Sally: C’mon mom, do you wanna win this thing?

Autumn: Of course!

Sally: Well then get on all fours and act like a monkey!

[Autumn reluctantly gets down starts crawling around.]

Autumn: Uh… ooh ooh

Sally: C’mon, you can do better than that.

[Molly walks up.]

Molly: Oh hey, monkey, nice choice. Wish we thoughta that.

Sally: It would be a nice choice if Autumn could get into character

Autumn: Sally, I don’t know how necessary all of this really—

[Jacy walks up on all fours and pants like a dog.]

Molly: Sit.

[Jacy sits down like a dog.]

Molly: Roll over.

[Jacy rolls over.]

Molly: Now go fetch

[Molly picks up a ball and Jacy chases after it barking.]

Sally: Wow, this is adorable. We’re gonna get creamed.

Molly: Oh, I know

[Molly reaches into a box of props and pulls out a monkey organ]

Molly: A cute little dance is bound to wow the audience.

Autumn: I don’t know if that’s really necessary

[Blake walks by dressed up like a classic doll.]

Sally: No, it’s incredibly necessary.

[Cut to Autumn on stage, nervously dancing as Sally, dressed up like an organ grinder. The Darling Detector barely moves, and the judges look incredibly bored.]

Sally: C’mon mom, we’re blowing it out here. Smile, put some joy in it, do something

[Autumn looks over to Cecelia who is giggling as she looks beyond the curtain. Then Autumn looks towards the camera.]

Autumn: Alright Autumn, you’re already this far. Just go with it…

[Autumn dances more excitably and smiles. She starts giving off some monkey sounds as she does so and the judges all start to perk up.]

Kimiko: Huh, who knew the way to get Autumn to participate more was to dress her like a monkey. I’ll have to keep note of that.

[Franklin presses a button on a microphone in between all three judges, clearly there to allow them to communicate with the adult participants.]

Franklin: So, does this monkey do any special tricks?

Sally: Uh… tricks?

[Autumn rolls her eyes.]

Autumn: This is what gym trained me for.

[Autumn does cartwheels and flips down the catwalk.]

Sally: Uh… yes, I think so.

Franklin: I dunno if that was cute, but it certainly was awesome.

[Cut to Autumn and Sally returning back stage.]

Sally: I think that we did pretty good.

[Talula walks up with a sneer.]

Talula: Oh, I wouldn’t think so. You may have been able to wake up your mother half way through her performance, but I don’t think that saved it. Mine is leagues ahead.

Sally: She wore the exact same outfit as Gwen.

Talula: Yeah, and they went out at the same time. I was in the audience, and they found it adorable.

[Sally looks nervous.]

Talula: Face it, you two have lost this one.

[Cut to the audience with Blake dressed as a doll with his daughter, Jill, standing next to him.]

Jill: And when my most favoritist dolly broke, my daddy Blake dressed up like her just like this and played with me until mommy came home and fixed it.

[The Darling Detector goes off the charts.]

Violet: I believe that we have a winner for this round. I am seriously crying rainbows right now.

[Cut back to backstage. Talula is not at all pleased.]

Talula: Eliza, come here! We've got work to do if we want to embarass this novice.

Sally: No one calls me a novel! C'mon Autumn, we've got work to do if we wanna beat that snooty pants.

Autumn: What have I gotten myself into?

[We have a montage of the adults competing in the other events, starting with the pool fun time event. Each of the adults dress up in glittery or ridiculous swimsuits with pool tools or floaties. Autumn finds herself dressed up in a bunch of duck themed items - from a tube to floaties. Eliza is wearing a fashionable childish swimsuit. Cecelia tries dressing up like a mermaid and attempts to flop across the catwalk, only ending up falling over the side. Cherry walks onto the camera]

Cherry: Uh, talent competition!

[Cecelia picks herself up.]

Cecelia: Oh, I can do that! Aheem

Cherry: Cut to commercial! Cut to commercial!

Cecelia: LAAAAAAAAA

[The fourth wall camera cracks and turns to static as Cherry covers her ears and ducks for cover.]

[Cut to back stage, Autumn is dressed up like a magician. Sally is wearing bunny ears.]

Autumn: Feels strange to be dressed up like this again.

Sally: Must bring you back, huh?

[Autumn blanks for a moment. Then she comes to her senses.]

Autumn: Yeah… look, I dunno if magic is the best thing for me to be doing.

Sally: I thought this was you wanted to do all of this for. To relive your memories of the stage.

Autumn: Well, not exactly.

[Talula walks by acting snooty.]

Talula: My mom just juggled chainsaws and all you two can pull out is a puny little magic act? That’s pathetic.

[Sally starts steaming.]

Sally: C’mon mom, let’s get this act downpat. We have to win.

Autumn: Sally, I know that Talula is well… annoying, but is that any reason to try and win a competition to spite her?

Robert: I dunno, is it?

[Camera pans back to show Robert standing there.]

Autumn: Geeze, how long were you standing there!?

Robert: Long enough to hear something about it being a bad idea to try and spite someone in a competition.

Sally: See, this is why kids are in charge. All we gotta do is win this competition and we can rub it in Talula’s face, and she won’t be bothering us again.

[Robert turns towards Autumn with a smile.]

Autumn: Don’t you say anything.

Robert: What? I was just gonna wish my girls luck in their last couple of competitions. After all, you’ve got to beat Cecelia, right?

[Sally is confused.]

Sally: Cecelia? Molly said she’s a joke. She hasn’t won here a single time she’s competed.

Autumn: Wait, but every year Cecelia goes on and on about how she dominated the competition.

Robert: Huh… so apparently we live in a world where everyone doesn't tell the truth one hundred percent of the time. Well I'll be a monkey's uncle.

Sally: Uh… monkey's husband.

Robert: Oh yes, I've got it on tape.

Autumn: Well, I don't get why she would lie about this of all things.

[Cut to Cecelia awkwardly waving to the other contestants with a big creepy smile. Then she turns towards Autumn.]

Cecelia: Hey there, bestie. Good luck on the talent show.

Autumn: What? Not telling me how sorry you are that I'm even trying? That I'll look good, for an old woman.

Cecelia: Nah, I can't compete in this one. It's a parent-child talent show, and I uh… don't have an assistant let's say.

Autumn: I'm sorry to hear that.

Cecelia: Oh don't be. When I win this competition it's so gonna boost my appeal with the kids and I'll be adopted in no time. You know, if my prince doesn't sweep me off of my feet first.

[Cecelia skips off.]

Robert: I really want to know what world Cecelia lives in.

Sally: I don’t think that matters, we’re up next! Let’s move, move!

[Sally pushes Autumn along.]

[Cut to Autumn on stage, struggling to keep her happy grin.]

Autumn: And uh… now for my final trick, I’ll pull a bunny out of my hat—

[Autumn reaches into the hat and pulls out Sally wearing her bunny ears.]

Sally: Ta-da!

[The Darling Detector rises fairly high. Cherry walks onto camera.]

Cherry: That was great, and now we’ll have a grand finale after these words from our most delightful sponsors.

[We cut to static, and when the static disappears we see Gimmie on camera.]

Gimmie: This thing on? Gimmie wants to know why pretty girl Comet says he smells funny. Gimmie does not smell funny. Gimmie smells like beef jerky. Beef jerky is NOT funny.

Camerakid {voice over}: No, you’re supposed to say what you want OTHER people to know—

Gimmie: Oh, Gimmie understand. Gimmie want other people to know that beef jerky is NOT funny.

Camerakid {Voice over} Uh… yeah, that’s great. That’ll be 500 cards.

Gimmie: What!? That was no deal.

Camerakid {Voice over} Uh yeah it was. We had a contract.

Gimmie: We cannot have contract. Gimmie ate contract, so it does not exist. Contract is ingested so it no count.

Camerakid {Voice over}: Do you mean invalid?

Gimmie: No, Gimmie not stupid. Gimmie full.

Camerakid {Voice over} I think you are stupid. You’re supposed to tell kids what you’re selling. You know, at your store.

Gimmie: Why Gimmie do that? Kids need to come to Gimmie’s store to find out what Gimmie has. If they know, they won’t come.

Camerakid {Voice over} You know what, I’m wasting time here. Cut.

Gimmie: But then the kids will never know the secret of CHICKEN jerky.

[The camera goes to static, and then we have Cherry on camera looking very confused and disturbed.]

Cherry: What kind of kids pay for this? Huh, what? The camera’s rolling?

[Cherry brushes herself off and smiles.]

Cherry: Well, it’s time for the final event. Our (mostly) adorable contestants are gonna give us one final showcase of just how cute they can be. I hope you have your sweet tooth ready because they’ll be serving you one huge helping of cutie pie.

[Cut to Autumn and Sally behind the curtain.]

Sally: Alright, so the wink and the curtsey was great but you need to work on the twirl if you really want to wow everyone.

[Autumn looks over to Cecelia, who is just staring at herself in the mirror, and smiling dopily.]

Autumn: Uh… Sally, I’m gonna take five.

Sally: But we’ve only got a few minutes left if we want to crush Talula!

[Autumn thinks for a moment.]

Autumn: Don’t you trust me that I can whoop all their butts?

Sally: O-of course you can, but we can’t get cocky! We gotta make sure there’s no risk of failure whatsoever, so you’re staying in that chair and we’re going over your whole routine from the top!

Autumn: Sally, c’mon, I really think.

Sally: Autumn, c’mon, this is your dream and i’m gonna make sure you achieve it. I even brought Charmichael for luck!

[Sally pulls out her Charmichael toy.]

Autumn: This isn’t my dream!

[Sally thinks for a moment.]

Sally: Destiny, alright.

Autumn: No, this Cuteness Pageant isn’t my dream or my destiny or my fate or anything. I just… told you that so you’d let me compete.

[This crushes Sally.]

Sally: W-what? So what’s all of this about then?

Autumn: I was… doing what you’re doing. I was using this competition as an attempt to get back at someone who was annoying me.

[Cecelia in the background, turns towards the two. Sally does not look pleased, and she wipes away a tear.]

Sally: No Autumn. You didn’t do what I did because I didn’t lie to anyone!

Autumn: I-I’m sorry

Sally: You just do whatever you want to, and I’ll ground you when we get home—

[Sally marches off. Eliza is standing next to Autumn.]

Eliza: Wow, that was… pretty cute.

[Autumn punches her in the nose, causing her to fall over. Talula runs by, completely shocked.]

Talula: You just hit my mother!

Autumn: Yup.

Talula: I should have known that Sally girl would have a parent like you—

Autumn: Hey, don’t you say a thing about my daughter. She’s a better kid than you’ll ever be.

[Talula and Eliza walk off. Autumn stairs in her vanity mirror.]

Autumn: And I upset her something bad.

[Cecelia walks up.]

Cecelia: I have to say… I’m surprised.

[Autumn turns her eyes towards Cecelia.]

Cecelia: I’ve never seen it take this long for someone get punched in the face backstage.

[Cecelia looks sheepishly towards Autumn.]

Cecelia: Did you really… join this pageant because I was annoying you?

Autumn: Yeah. I’m sorry Cecelia, I didn’t know how important this was to you.

Cecelia: Really? With how often I talked about it?

Autumn: I guess I could be a bit more dense than you sometimes.

Cecelia: Yeah you could. Hey, wait!

Autumn: Sorry… I seem to be hurting everyone’s feelings today.

Cecelia: Nah, I’m not hurt. It wasn’t like I was gonna win this anyway. I just thought that if I started acting like a winner, it would have happened.

Autumn: There’s more to acting like a winner than saying that you’re one.

Cecelia: Like what?

Autumn: Well, you've got to pay attention to the judges. You don't need to hear 'em to know if they're annoyed or not. Sometimes smiling as wide as possible isn't the right solution. And uh… I would recommend doing something you're actually good at for the talent contest.

Cecelia: Wow, harsh. But I guess I need some harsh reality once in awhile.

Autumn: You do live in a bit of a fantasy land.

[Cecelia pulls back the curtain a bit.]

Cecelia: Well yeah, I guess I do. Maybe I wouldn't be so much if I lived in your kind of world, with a loyal husband and a daughter who helps you fulfill your dreams… even if they're not really your dreams.

[Both Cecelia and Autumn pause for a beat.]

Cecelia: And you're totally gonna win this thing. If you wanna go out there, that is.

Autumn: I don't know if Sally would forgive me if I did. I gave up both of our dignity for this stupid thing.

Cecelia: Maybe you should apologize then?

[Autumn thinks for a moment. Then she notices Charmichael left on the vanity. Cut to Sally boredly sitting in the audience. Molly is next to her.]

Molly: So, what’s your mom gonna do?

Sally: I don’t know, and I don’t care.

Molly: What do you mean?

Sally: I mean it’s a secret. She’s got a lot of them lately.

Molly: I suppose that magicians usually do.

[Cut to Autumn stepping out onto stage, incredibly bashful. She inches her way forward.]

Molly: Ooh, the bashful shy look, that’s sure to win some cutie points. Are you sure your mom’s never done this before?

Sally: Nope.

Molly: She’s even got a stuffed animal, now that is dedication.

Sally: Stuffed animal?

[Sally perks up and notices that Autumn is carrying Charmichael. Sally looks shocked.]

Sally: W-what’s she doing with Charmichael? Okay, lying is one thing but throwing Charmichael into this is a new low.

[Autumn walks up to the edge of the catwalk.]

Autumn: H-hello everyone. I’m Ms. Autumn, and I brought a special friend with me today. This here is Charmichael, and he’s my daughter’s favorite little friend in the whole world.

[Cut to Sally in her seat.]

Sally: If this turns into a hostage situation, I swear she is dead meat.

Autumn: I made this little guy for her a long, long time ago. I doubt she even remembers now, but it was after she and her best friend had gotten into a big fight. I hated seeing her sad, so I made up this creature and put him together, and she loved him immediately.

[Sally starts looking sad again.]

Autumn: I hate seeing my daughter sad. And I made her sad again today when I lied to her. I lied to her to let me compete in this contest, even though she didn’t want me to. And I did it for selfish reasons too. There’s nothing I want more for her to forgive me, and I want her to understand that I’d never do anything to purposefully hurt her.

[Sally is almost in tears at this point.]

Autumn: I’m sorry, but I shouldn’t even be in this competition.

[Autumn sadly walks back stage, leaving the audience and the judges to whisper among each other. Cut to back stage, where Sally meets up with Autumn.]

Sally: I can’t believe I was so mad I forgot Charmichael!

Autumn: Yeah, when you did that I knew I had really hurt you. Here he is.

[Autumn hands over Charmichael. Sally looks at him and sees that Charmichael has both of his eyes on.]

Sally: You… fixed him?

Autumn: There was enough loose buttons around here. You know you could have asked me and I would have been happy to do it.

Sally: I thought you’d be mad at me for losing it.

Autumn: I don’t know if it’s… enough to forgive me for what I did.

[Sally smiles.]

Sally: It’s a start.

[Cherry steps backstage.]

Cherry: Will all contestants please come on stage.

Sally: You better go.

Autumn: But I dropped out, remember?

Sally: Might as well see this thing through to the end, right?

[Cut to Autumn standing there among the other contestants. Eliza and Gwen are looking snide at each other and everyone else is a various shade of nervous. Autumn looks forlorn. Cherry gets an envelope and opens it.]

Cherry: It looks like Summerway’s Mr. or Ms. Huggably Adorable this year is Ms. Autumn!

[Autumn looks incredibly shocked as she’s given a sash with “Huggably Adorable placed over it” and there’s a bunch of cheering in the crowd.]

Autumn: I don’t understand—

Cherry: The judges are a sucker for a good apology story.

Eliza: I should have known.

Autumn: Well, at least this is over with.

[Cut to Autumn modeling a different cute dress in her house. Sally is dressed up like a coach.]

Sally: C’mon, you call that a curtsey? I’ve seen Max give better.

[Max enters the house, and is immediately confused.]

Max: Uh… I thought that the pageant would have been over by now.

Autumn: It is… and I won.

Sally: Which means that she has to support Summerway in regionals. Looks like we're a pageant family now, Max.

[Max walks over to Robert, who is smiling and suppressing a laugh.]

Max: Hey uh… Robbie, I want you to punch me as hard as you can.

Robert: Why?

Max: Because I'm either dreaming or I really want to be.

[Sally blows her whistle.]

Sally: Ooh, I know, try talking with a lisp! That's sure to wow the judges.

Autumn: What have I gotten myself into?

Sally: And remember to keep smiling!

[Autumn gives a forced smile.]

Autumn: I really hate my life right now.

[End.]